

Please insert the following paragraph on page 12, after the last paragraph:

B8
~Although particular preferred embodiments of the invention have been disclosed in detail for illustrative purposes, it will be recognized that variations or modifications of the disclosed apparatus, including the rearrangement of parts, lie within the scope of the present invention. ~

IN THE CLAIMS

[Applicant hereby cancels Claims 2-4 and 8 without prejudice.

Please amend Claims 1, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15 as follows:

Sub
C1
B9
1. (Amended) A flexible milk hose made from a uniform material for connecting a teat cup to a multiway valve in an automatic milking plant, comprising:
a first end portion for connection to a connecting neck of the teat cup;
a second end portion for connection to a connecting neck of the multiway valve, and;
a centre piece having a substantially constant interior diameter, and including spaced-apart reinforcement elements which at least partially enclose a circumference of a predetermined area of the centre piece, the centre piece having a greater flexibility than said first and second end portions, said flexibility increasing towards a middle of the centre piece.

B10
2. (Twice Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 1, wherein

the distance between two respective neighbouring reinforcement elements decreases from the middle of the centre piece towards the respective first and second end portions.

B11 ⁴~~3~~. (Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim ³~~1~~, wherein

a wall thickness of each of said spaced-apart elevations of material exceeds a wall thickness in an area located between two adjacent spaced-apart elevations of material.

B12 ⁵~~4~~. (Twice Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 1, wherein

the first and second end portions each have formed thereon a reinforcement element.

B13 ⁷~~6~~. (Twice Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 1, wherein

the hose consists, at least partially, of a permanently chemically passive and stable material which will not give off secretions to the milk during the milking operation.

B14 ⁹~~8~~. (Twice Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 1, wherein

a wall thickness of the reinforcement elements is smaller in the area of the middle of the centre piece than the wall thickness of the reinforcement elements arranged in areas of the centre piece closest to each end portion.

B15 ¹¹~~10~~. (Twice Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 1, wherein

a wall thickness of an intermediate area between two neighbouring reinforcement elements in the area of the middle of the centre piece is smaller than the wall thickness of the intermediate area of the reinforcement elements arranged in areas of said centre piece closest to each end portion.

Please add new Claims 17-32 as follows:

5-37
c1
B16
cont
13
17. (New) A milk hose for connecting a teat cup to a multiway valve in an automatic milking plant, said hose comprising a first end portion configured for connection to a connecting neck of the teat cup, a second end portion configured for connection to a connecting neck of the multiway valve, and a centre piece disposed between said first and second end portions and having an interior diameter which is substantially constant, said centre piece including a plurality of axially spaced reinforcement elements which extend circumferentially along an exterior of said centre piece and permit said centre piece to have a greater flexibility than said first and second end portions.

14
18. (New) A flexible milk hose according to claim 17, wherein the distance between adjacent pairs of reinforcement elements decreases from the middle of the centre piece towards the respective first and second end portions.

15
19. (New) A flexible milk hose according to claim 17, wherein the reinforcement elements are defined by spaced-apart elevations which enclose the circumference of the centre piece.

16
20. (New) A flexible milk hose according to claim 19, wherein a wall thickness of each of said elevations exceeds a wall thickness in an area located between two adjacent elevations.

17
21. (New) A flexible milk hose according to claim 19, wherein the first and second end portions each define thereon a reinforcement element.

18
22. (New) A flexible milk hose according to claim 21, wherein the reinforcement elements of said end portions each

have a wall thickness which exceeds the wall thickness of the first and second end portions.

¹⁹
~~23.~~ (New) A flexible milk hose according to claim ¹³~~17~~, wherein the centre piece comprises a permanently chemically passive and stable material which will not give off secretions to the milk during the milking operation.

²⁰
~~24.~~ (New) A flexible milk hose according to claim ¹³~~17~~, wherein a wall thickness of the centre piece decreases in a direction from the first and second end portions towards a middle of said centre piece.

²¹
~~25.~~ (New) A flexible milk hose according to claim ¹³~~17~~, wherein a wall thickness of the reinforcement elements is smaller in the area of a middle of the centre piece than a wall thickness of the reinforcement elements disposed adjacent the end portions.

²²
~~26.~~ (New) A flexible milk hose according to claim ²¹~~25~~, wherein the wall thickness of the reinforcement elements decreases continuously from the end portions towards the middle of the centre piece.

²³
~~27.~~ (New) A flexible milk hose according to claim ¹³~~17~~, wherein a wall thickness of an intermediate area between two adjacent reinforcement elements disposed adjacent a middle of the centre piece is smaller than a wall thickness of an intermediate area between two reinforcement elements disposed adjacent the respective end portions.

²⁴
~~28.~~ (New) A flexible milk hose according to claim ²³~~27~~, wherein the wall thickness of the intermediate areas decreases continuously in a direction from the first and second end portions towards the middle of said centre piece.